



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
*Southern Nevada Healthcare System*

## Media Release

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### **VASNHS virtual mental health care use on the rise amid COVID-19**

**NORTH LAS VEGAS, NEVADA** – The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) continues, daily, to deliver quality and timely mental health care to Veterans, even as the COVID-19 pandemic has made traveling to VA facilities complex.

VASNHS staff data shows a dramatic jump in virtual mental health care services in March, a sign Veterans are successfully accessing care despite the challenges the pandemic has presented. VA Video Connect allows Veterans to consult with their healthcare provider via their computer, tablet or phone. Also, during March, mental health providers completed more than 2,200 appointments with Veterans using VA Video Connect, an increase of over 500 percent from the 430 appointments made in February, before the pandemic.

“VASNHS knows the importance of providing mental health care during times of increased crisis,” said Tim Jobin, associate chief of staff of Behavioral Health. “Thanks to the VA’s pre-pandemic focus on tele-mental health, VASNHS was able to seamlessly transition most mental health care to virtual care on very short notice. As a result of this planning, VASNHS is on track to complete 3,600 VA video connect visits in April. That’s a 700 percent increase when compared to February.”

Nationwide, VA mental health providers completed more than 34,000 appointments with Veterans using VA Video Connect, an increase of 70 percent from the 20,000 appointments made in February. Here’s a breakdown of the increases.

- Telehealth group therapy conducted more than 2,700 visits in March, a jump of more than 200 percent from the prior month.

- Mental health care and consultation delivered by phone rose to more than 154,000 appointments in March, up 280 percent from the 40,000 appointments in February.
- Vet Centers across the nation held more than 22,000 virtual encounters in March, a 461 percent increase from February. Most of these encounters dealt with mental health issues.

Mental health care is especially important during stressful times such as these and VASNHS invites Veterans to take advantage of the care they've earned. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said the numbers show VA has made a quick adjustment to ensure ongoing support to Veterans during these difficult times.

"VA is open for business and we continue to provide same-day mental health services and mental health screening for Veterans at-risk who require attention at any of our facilities," said Wilkie. "There is no doubt VA's early embrace of new technology is aiding Veterans and I applaud VA health care workers and Veteran patients for embracing it."

To request a virtual care appointment or to convert an in-person appointment to virtual care, call 702-791-9024. For Veterans in crisis, help is available at the Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, and press 1, or text 838255.

For more information about VA's overall response to the COVID-19, please refer to <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions>